

To Be or Not to Be: The Tree

Teacher and volunteer script

MAYOR I call this City Council meeting to order.

CITY CLERK I will take role. Council Member #1? [say name]

COUNCIL MEMBER #1 Here.

CITY CLERK Council Member #2? [say name]

COUNCIL MEMBER #2 Here.

CITY CLERK Council Member #3? [say name]

COUNCIL MEMBER #3 Here.

CITY CLERK Council Member #4? [say name]

COUNCIL MEMBER #4 Here.

CITY CLERK Mayor? [say name]

MAYOR Here.

CITY MANAGER *[showing Agenda Bill]* Here is the first item on the agenda. It allows City of Carlsbad Parks employees to remove a big tree near the sidewalk at 2345 Oak Avenue. Here is the Parks Supervisor to describe the problem and explain why the Parks Department thinks the tree should be removed.

PARKS SUPERVISOR *[showing photo of tree]* This tree is very old and very large. Its roots have spread so much, it is breaking up the concrete on the sidewalk. If we don't cut down the tree, the sidewalk will crack more and more. Someone walking on the sidewalk could trip and fall.

MAYOR The Council Members have a few questions to ask staff.

MAYOR Council Member #1 [say name]: What is your question, please?

COUNCIL MEMBER #1 This question is for the Parks Supervisor. Has anyone fallen yet?

PARKS SUPERVISOR Not that we know of.

MAYOR Council Member #2 [say name]: What is your question, please?

COUNCIL MEMBER #2 I would like to ask the Attorney a question. If someone fell on the crack on the sidewalk and broke their leg, could they sue the City?

ATTORNEY Yes. Since the City owns the tree and the tree is on a public right-of-way, the City could be sued for a lot of money. I believe the City Manager remembers that happening once.

CITY MANAGER Yes, that happened many years ago. Two children were biking on a sidewalk where an old tree had caused the concrete to break up. One of the children flew off her bike and broke her arm. Her parents sued the City for the medical costs. They won the lawsuit.

MAYOR Council Member #3 [say name]: What is your question, please?

COUNCIL MEMBER #3 I am worried about this issue. I don't want someone to sue the City. Even more important, I don't want anyone to get hurt.

MAYOR Council Member #4 [say name]: What would you like to say?

COUNCIL MEMBER #4 I agree. What if a mother walking her baby in a stroller hit that part of the sidewalk. The baby could be badly injured!

To Be or Not to Be: The Tree

MAYOR I have a question for the Parks Supervisor. It seems like cutting down the tree is an extreme solution. Is that our only option?

PARKS SUPERVISOR I will ask the Staff Arborist to answer that question.

STAFF ARBORIST As a certified arborist, I am an expert on trees. I have examined this tree very carefully. Although the tree is very old and very beautiful, I believe that its root structure is dangerous. Even if we cut some of the branches, the roots would continue to grow and spread.

MAYOR Thank you. To help guide us in making a decision about the tree, the City Council asked the Parks and Recreation Commission to look into the matter. The Commission prepared a report. I would like the Commission Chairperson to tell what they found.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON The members of our commission looked at the tree and the sidewalk. We talked to the Parks Supervisor and staff. We reviewed what other cities have done about this problem. We recommend that the City cut down the tree. It's not dangerous yet, but it could be in the future.

MAYOR Thank you. Have any people come to this meeting to speak about the tree issue?

CITY CLERK Yes. People on both sides of the issue have filled out "Request to Speak" forms. The first group to speak is the Lopez Family.

LOPEZ FAMILY (holding the sign: SAVE THE TREE.)

[Family Member #1] We are the Lopez family. We live at 2345 Oak Avenue, in the house by the tree.

[Family Member #2] We love the tree! It gives us shade in the summer.

[Family Member #3] We enjoy looking at it from our window. We walk on that part of the sidewalk all the time and we don't think it's dangerous.

[Family Member #4] You just have to be careful and watch where you're going.

In classrooms larger than 20 students, the following roles can be apportioned as necessary among the additional students. If you prefer, you can instead make more copies of the Lopez Family's SAVE THE TREE sign and give these signs to the students who do not have speaking parts.

[Family Member #5] We are always careful when we ride our bike past the tree.

[Family Member #6] We think the tree is very beautiful.

[Family Member #7] Yes, and it is a very old tree.

[Family Member #8] I would feel very sad if the tree was cut down.

[Family Member #9] So would I.

[Family Member #10] That's why the Lopez Family believes you should save the tree.

MAYOR Thank you for sharing your thoughts. Is there anyone else who has requested to speak?

CITY CLERK Yes. The Johnson Family has also filled out a "Request to Speak" form.

JOHNSON FAMILY (holding the sign: CUT DOWN THE TREE.)

[Family Member #1] We are the Johnson family. We live at 2348 Oak Avenue, across the street from the tree.

[Family Member #2] We agree with our neighbors, the Lopez Family, that the tree is beautiful.

[Family Member #3] But we think the tree situation is dangerous. We think the tree will get even more dangerous as time goes by and the crack on the sidewalk gets bigger and bigger.

To Be or Not to Be: The Tree

[Family Member #4] We like to skateboard on that sidewalk with our friends.

[Family Member #5] Even though we wear helmets and safety gear, if someone hits that crack, they could get hurt. We don't want that to happen.

In classrooms larger than 20 students, the following roles can be apportioned as necessary among the additional students. If you prefer, you can instead make more copies of the Johnson Family's CUT DOWN THE TREE signs and give these signs to the students who do not have speaking parts.

[Family Member #6] Our family would feel awful if someone got hurt.

[Family Member #7] And we would not like it if the City were sued.

[Family Member #8] If the City were sued, it might lose money it could otherwise spend fixing streets and building parks.

[Family Member #9] We love trees, but we also love parks.

[Family Member #10] And we really want people to be safe.

[Family Member #11] That's why the Johnson Family believes you should cut down the tree.

MAYOR Thank you for sharing your thoughts. Before we vote, I would like to say that all of us on the Council believe that trees add to the beauty of Carlsbad. We do not want to cut down a tree unless it is absolutely necessary. Yesterday afternoon, I took a walk down Oak Avenue to look at the tree. It is a beautiful tree, but I believe the situation is dangerous.

COUNCIL MEMBER #1 I, too, took a good look at the tree. In my opinion, the crack in the sidewalk is not very big and does not pose a serious danger. I think we should wait a few years before making a decision to cut down this tree.

COUNCIL MEMBER #2 I would like to ask the Parks and Recreation Commission Chairperson how old the tree is.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMISSION CHAIRPERSON We believe the tree is one of the oldest trees in Carlsbad. It is at least 67 years old.

COUNCIL MEMBER #3 Wow. Carlsbad has been a city for more than 60 years – since 1952 – so the tree is older than the City of Carlsbad! Maybe we should not cut it down until we investigate other ways of making the sidewalk safe.

COUNCIL MEMBER #4 It is a shame to cut down an old and beautiful tree that is part of our city's past. But public safety is also important.

MAYOR It is time to call for a vote.

COUNCIL MEMBER #4 I make a motion to cut down the tree at 2345 Oak Avenue.

COUNCIL MEMBER #2 I second the motion.

Lesson 6



To Be or Not to Be: The Tree

Note: Meeting pauses here while volunteer reviews the problem and process up to this point.

Note to volunteer:

Stop the meeting at this point and explain that the Mayor and Council Members will now vote on the issue. Review the dilemma, noting the key points of safety vs. beauty. Tell the Council that they should think about everything they heard and vote either to cut down the tree or not cut it down. Tell them to consider what is best for the City and all the citizens when they vote, because they are representing all of the approximately 100,000 people who live in Carlsbad.

Continuation of Council meeting:

CITY CLERK All in favor of cutting down the tree:

Council Members vote by raising their hands.

CITY CLERK All in favor of not cutting down the tree:

Council Members vote by raising their hands

1. If the motion passes ...

MAYOR The vote is _____ for cutting down the tree; _____ against cutting down the tree. The motion passes by a _____ to _____ vote. The tree at 2345 Oak Avenue will be cut down.

2. If the motion fails ...

MAYOR The vote is _____ for cutting down the tree; _____ against cutting down the tree. The motion fails by a _____ to _____ vote. The tree at 2345 Oak Avenue will not be cut down.

NOTE: Ask Council Members to explain why they voted as they did.

Volunteer: That was a great meeting! We will end our mock council meeting now, and hand out your graduation certificates. (If a City official or other guest is handing out the certificates, introduce that person.)